

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
ROANOKE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

CHRISTOPHER BUONO

Case No. 7:24mj56

Filed Under Seal

**AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF
CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AND ARREST WARRANT**

I, Christopher M. Cummings, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of Affidavit

1. I respectfully submit this affidavit to establish probable cause in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant charging CHRISTOPHER BUONO ("BUONO") with a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2251(a) (Sexual Exploitation of Children) occurring on or about January 27, 2024, in the Western District of Virginia and elsewhere.

B. Agent Background and Experience

2. I am a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), currently assigned to Roanoke, Virginia, and have been so employed since November 2003. Prior to being employed by HSI, I served in the Department of Justice as a Border Patrol Agent from 2000 until 2003. In my current capacity as a Special Agent, I am responsible for investigating crimes relating to the sexual exploitation of children, including but not limited to crimes pertaining to the solicitation and enticement, as well as the importation, advertising, possession, access with intent to view, transportation, receipt, and distribution of child pornography in the Western District of Virginia. My training includes basic, advanced, and on-the-job training in this investigative area. I am familiar with procedures for obtaining and

executing federal search warrants and I have led and participated in the execution of numerous search and arrest warrants related to child exploitation and other sexual offenses, firearms and narcotics violations, money laundering, and fraud. I am a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Criminal Investigator Training Program, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent Training program, and the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Basic On-Line Investigative Techniques Course. As a result of this training and experience, I am responsible for enforcing federal criminal statutes involving the sexual exploitation of children, including offenses under Title 18, United States Code, Section 2251.

C. Sources of Information

3. The facts in this affidavit come from my personal observations, my training and experience, information obtained from other law enforcement officers, and other sources which I believe to be reliable. To the extent this affidavit also includes statements obtained from witnesses, some, but not all, of their provided information has been verified or corroborated. This affidavit is intended to show simply that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested warrant and does not set forth all of my knowledge about this matter. Further, my understanding of the facts and circumstances described herein may change or evolve as the investigation progresses.

II. PROBABLE CAUSE

A. BUONO identified by law enforcement after online discussions about his sexual interest and access to minors.

4. This investigation was initiated based upon information obtained by an HSI undercover agent (UCA) who was monitoring chat conversations on an online messaging application (the "Application")¹ with an individual using the username "HAPPYHAPPY792."

¹ The specific application is not being named here in order to protect the integrity of ongoing undercover efforts using

Using the information outlined below, I performed database checks and conducted other investigative efforts to determine that HAPPYHAPPY792 is believed to be BUONO, who is believed to live at 349 Arch Mill Road in Buchanan, Virginia, located within the Western District of Virginia.

5. In April 2023, the UCA observed that HAPPYHAPPY792 was a member of a message application chat group in which multiple users were discussing child exploitation. The UCA observed that HAPPYHAPPY792's profile image was an image depicting child pornography—specifically, the image appeared to the UCA to be a close-up view of a prepubescent female's vagina.

6. In April 2023, the UCA chatted “one on one” with HAPPYHAPPY792 on the messaging application. HAPPYHAPPY792 told the UCA that he was currently sexually active with his 6-year-old daughter, that he was married, and that he resides in “the States.” HAPPYHAPPY792 sent an image to the UCA of a clothed minor female and stated in reference to the image: “I got this little cutie the other night. 13 years old. She's my neighbor.” The UCA observed that the image appeared to come from an unknown Facebook profile page.

7. Also in April 2023, HAPPYHAPPY792 sent the UCA another image of a clothed minor female. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that the minor female's name was “Sara” and that he was babysitting her. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that he “worked” the depicted minor female for six months, after which he “finally” sexually assaulted the minor female. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that the minor female's mother works “nights” and that he babysits the minor female while her mother is working. HAPPYHAPPY792 also stated he was no longer married.

the Application.

8. HAPPYHAPPY792 then sent the UCA an image of two clothed minor females. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated the two minor females depicted in the image were his daughters. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated one of the minor females was 6 years old and provided her name (“Minor Victim 1”). HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that the other minor female was 4 years old (“Minor Victim 2”) and provided her name, as well. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that he was sexually abusing both of his purported daughters, but that he only sees them every other weekend. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that he was living in the same town as his ex-wife² and that he lived in Virginia, approximately two hours from North Carolina. HAPPYHAPPY792 also stated he is 43 years old.

9. In August 2023, HSI’s Cyber Crimes Center (C3) received information from HSI The Hague. This information related to investigative efforts taken by law enforcement in Sweden (LES). LES stated that they were working with a confidential informant who reported that HAPPYHAPPY792 had been observed participating in group chats in the Application. The confidential informant reported that, in August 2023, HAPPYHAPPY792 had stated on the Application that he was a single male from the United States and that he was sexually abusing his daughter. HAPPYHAPPY792 posted an image of a minor female who he stated was his daughter. LES provided a redacted screen capture of HAPPYHAPPY792’s Application profile, and the profile image matches the profile image reported by the UCA.

10. In August 2023, HSI C3, again received information from HSI The Hague that LES had observed HAPPYHAPPY792 in Application chat groups entitled “Boys and Men” and “My Fam.” LES also provided HAPPYHAPPY792’s portions of these chats to HSI. These chats did

² Based on a review of BUONO’s spouse’s Facebook page, as described below, it appears that she and Chris Buono remain married.

not involve the UCA or LES's confidential informant but were obtained via other non-undercover law enforcement methods.

11. During chats in these groups, HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that he was from "Va"³ and was sexually abusing his 6-year-old daughter. HAPPYHAPPY792 posted images depicting what appear to be a minor female's nude vagina and images of an adult man's penis. HAPPYHAPPY792 described the penis as his "little pedo cock." HAPPYHAPPY792 stated that his penis barely fits in his 6-year old's vagina. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated "my [name of Minor Victim 1] is going in to first grade."

12. HAPPYHAPPY792 further described a time he "accidentally" exposed his penis to a minor female at a Virginia convenience store. HAPPYHAPPY792 stated he was wearing shorts without any underwear and didn't realize his penis was exposed outside of his shorts. HAPPYHAPPY792 explained he saw a minor female wearing a sundress in the store with her mother. Looking at the minor female made HAPPYHAPPY792 start to get an erection thus creating the "accidental exposure."

13. In addition to the images described above, HAPPYHAPPY792 posted an image, identified as 20231612_124438_00010.jpg, is of a prepubescent nude female child with her legs spread with the camera focused on her vagina. She is wearing a yellow shirt. HAPPYHAPPY792 also posted image iris_667_00005.jpg, which shows a prepubescent nude female child with the camera focused on her vagina. It appears there is an adult's hand holding her right ankle. She is also wearing a yellow shirt but with a different design from the previous minor victim.

14. A review of these chat logs also revealed that HAPPYHAPPY792 posted several Mega.nz links within the chats. It is unknown if these links contained child sexual abuse material.

³ Based on my participation in this investigation, knowledge of BUONO's location, and common senses, I believe "Va" is an abbreviation for "Virginia."

LES was also able to determine from its review of the chats that HAPPYHAPPY792 appeared to use the email address HAPPYHAPPY792@proton.me. Based on my training and experience, I know that ProtonMail email accounts use end-to-end encryption to send and receive messages. As a result, these accounts are perceived by users to be more secure and may be used by individuals engaged in illegal conduct to evade law enforcement detection.

15. In August 2023, pursuant to legal process, Amazon Web Services (AWS) provided information associated with the above-referenced monikers, HAPPYHAPPY792 and HAPPYHAPPY792@proton.me. According to this information, both HAPPYHAPPY792 and HAPPYHAPPY792@proton.me were using an Android device to access the Application. AWS further provided “push token” data associated with HAPPYHAPPY792 and HAPPYHAPPY792@proton.me’s use of the Application. No personal identifying subscriber information was provided.

16. On December 27, 2023, a summons was issued to Google, LLC, related to push token data obtained from AWS for HAPPYHAPPY792. On December 28, 2023, Google provided HSI with the following, among other information:

Device Data: Android ID: 3591085621243033566
MEID(s): 35096237568362IMEI(s): 350962375683627Time of Last Data
Connection: Aug 4, 2023, 6:41:11 PM UTCIP address from Last Data
Connection: 2607:fb90:b386:7f4c:7f68:c5c7:8c77:dda5

17. An internet search revealed that the referenced IP address was registered to T-Mobile.

18. On January 7, 2024, a DHS Summons was served on T-Mobile requesting subscriber information for the T-Mobile subscriber using the device identified by Google.

19. On January 8, 2024, T-Mobile provided the following subscriber information, among other information⁴:

Subscriber Name: [BUONO's spouse's name]
Subscriber Address: 349 ARCH MILL RD, BUCHANAN, VA 24066 USA
Subscriber Status: Active
Subscriber Name Effective Date: 07/19/2019
Telephone Number: [REDACTED] 8340
Device IMEI: 350962375683627
Contact 2: [REDACTED] 8348

20. Law enforcement officers conducted a query for the address 349 Arch Mill Road in Buchanan, Virginia, and discovered that this address is associated with the suspected spouse of BUONO (the "Spouse") and Christopher J. BUONO. According to this data-mining database, Christopher J. BUONO was born in September 1979, meaning that he was 43 years old in August 2023. It is common for individuals to use a portion of their birth year when they create an online moniker or profile, and the use of "792" by HAPPYHAPPY792 could have a correlation with BUONO's 1979 year of birth. BUONO is also linked in this database to the telephone number [REDACTED]-8340.

21. As previously discussed in this Affidavit, HAPPYHAPPY792 stated to the UCA he resides in Virginia approximately two hours from North Carolina. A search via Google Maps for 349 Arch Mill Road, Buchanan, Virginia, 24066, indicates that this residence is approximately two hours from the North Carolina state border.

22. An Internet search for the Spouse revealed a possible business-related Facebook profile. This Facebook profile page lists the name of the Spouse and a telephone number which was the alternate contact number for the T-Mobile account.

⁴ HSI also requested subscriber information associated with the above-referenced IP address on August 4, 2023, but T-Mobile informed that it no longer had such information, due to their retention policy.

23. A second Facebook profile was located for the Spouse. This profile page contains images that would indicate the Spouse has younger children. On January 22, 2024, I was reviewing the Spouse's Facebook pictures, and noticed a photograph of the Spouse holding a small child appearing to be between one and two years old [REDACTED]

24. Another post on [REDACTED] was a photograph of the Spouse holding a small child in which the Spouse stated [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This photograph was commented on by another Facebook user ("Person 1"), who wrote [REDACTED] Law enforcement then queried Person 1's Facebook page and immediately saw a picture of a small female child in [REDACTED], post that appeared to be the same child as was in the picture that HAPPYHAPPY792 sent to the UCA in April 2023. I also saw several other photographs of this child on Person 1's Facebook page, and, based on those photographs, I was able to determine that this child has the same name as Minor Victim 1.

25. Based on a review of Facebook posts and photographs on Person 1's Facebook page, it appears that Person 1 has two small daughters with the same names as Minor Victim 1 and Minor Victim 2. It is also apparent from Facebook that one of these girls was six years old in August 2023 and the other was four years old in early August 2023. It also appears from some of these Facebook posts that, from 2017 through the present [REDACTED] would babysit these two children.

B. Law enforcement execute a search warrant at BUONO's residence and find child pornography on BUONO's cell phone.

26. On February 1, 2024, this Court authorized a search warrant of 349 Arch Mill Road (7:24-MJ-15). A search of the home was executed the following day. Among the items seized in

the course of the search warrant was a Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra cell phone. BUONO acknowledged it was his cell phone and that he used his cell phone to look at child pornography.

27. After the execution of the search warrant, law enforcement interviewed Person 1. Person 1 reported that she was not aware of BUONO being alone with either of her daughters or of BUONO doing anything inappropriate with her daughters.

28. On or about February 22, 2024, a forensic interview of Minor Victim 1 and Minor Victim 2 was conducted. Based on these interviews, law enforcement was not able to detect any indicators of sexual abuse. Of note, I know from training and experience that the absence of indicators of sexual abuse in a forensic interview with a minor victim are not necessarily determinative of whether such activities occurred.

29. On April 18, 2024, a forensic examination of BUONO's cell phone revealed a photograph of Minor Victim 1 leaning back on a light brown couch wearing a light blue t-shirt with butterflies and a pair of black pants pulled down to her knees, resulting in her being naked below the waist. In the image, Minor Victim 1 is leaning back on the couch, smiling, with her legs spread apart, exposing her nude genital area. Examination of the metadata of the photograph revealed that the picture was taken on January 27, 2024, at approximately 8:00 p.m. The data contained within the photograph confirms the photograph was taken with BUONO's cell phone.

30. To potentially identify the image location of the seized photograph described above, I examined photographs taken by law enforcement during the search warrant of BUONO's residence. In particular, I compared the seized photograph of Minor Victim 1 to a search photograph depicting a couch in the game room of BUONO's residence. I observed that the couch in the search warrant photograph appears to be the same couch that Minor Victim 1 is leaning back on with her legs spread apart.

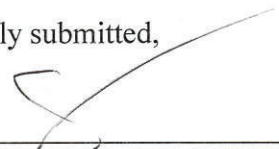
31. I submit there is probable cause that BUONO took the photograph of Minor Victim 1. In addition to the information provided above, I know from training, experience, and common sense, that individuals often use their personal cell phone to take photographs and videos. I also know that individuals typically have cell phones or other digital devices that are secured in some way (such as through a password) to limit others' abilities to access and use their cell phone. In this case, BUONO did have a cell phone that was secured by a pattern. BUONO agreed to provide this pattern to law enforcement, which allowed law enforcement to unlock the phone. Here, BUONO also communicated a sexual interest and access to minors which is consistent with the described image.

III. CONCLUSION

32. Based on the information detailed herein, I submit that probable cause exists to conclude that CHRISTOPHER BUONO violated 18 U.S.C. § 2251(a) (Sexual Exploitation of Children) on or about January 27, 2024, in the Western District of Virginia.

33. I declare under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Respectfully submitted,


CHRISTOPHER M. CUMMINGS
Special Agent
Homeland Security Investigations

Subscribed and sworn to before me on April 21, 2024


HONORABLE C. KAILANI MEMMER
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE